5-20-47

new masses

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J. Parnell Thomas' STRANGE VISITOR

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

SHOP TALK ON SHORT STORIES

CHARLES ABRAMS

PALESTINE: ACT II

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WHO, ME?

YES, YOU!

This issue of NEW MASSES is only sixteen pages — one-half size. We told you that unless we raised $5,000 by May 8, our printer wouldn't go to press with the next issue. But all that came in by that date was $3,805. After a conference with the printer — who, incidentally, has his own pressing obligations to meet — he agreed, in order to avoid suspension of NM, to publish a sixteen-page issue this week. But he felt himself unable to make a commitment for next week.

You alone can make that commitment. We appeal particularly to those thousands of NM readers who haven't yet contributed. Do you want to hold the fort that is NEW MASSES, to build it stronger for the battles that loom ahead?

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THE EDITORS.

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ROGER BALDWIN: What are you hiding?

The head of the Civil Liberties Union pays a mysterious visit to the head of the House Un-American Committee. "A strong meeting of minds between us," says Rep. Thomas.

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington.

IF YOU will thumb through the guest book in Rep. J. Parnell Thomas' office, you will find among the February 27 entries the name of Roger Baldwin of Oakland, N. J.

I first learned of this when, a day or so later, Rep. Thomas proudly showed me the Baldwin signature and said softly, a far-away look in his eyes: "I've been pretty close to Roger Baldwin. He's a constituent of mine."

It was all very puzzling, because the American Civil Liberties Union, of which Baldwin is the executive director, has opposed the Un-American Committee. In fact, at the time I had been needling Rep. Thomas, who chairs the committee, on two actions of the ACLU. It had been reported in the press as condemning the Thomas bill, introduced the same day Mr. Baldwin visited Mr. Thomas, and as condemning the committee for its role in the Gerhart Eisler arrest earlier. Rep. Thomas said he could understand how they might take issue with the Thomas bill—setting up a commission which would be the "final" authority on deciding what government workers should be fired as "disloyal." But he expressed surprise that the ACLU had taken such a position on the arrest of the German Communist, and it was then that he called for his guest book and produced Mr. Baldwin's signature.

I kept a notation on the matter in an "unfinished business" folder, meaning to obtain the ACLU's statement on the Eisler case and return to confront Rep. Thomas with it, and to ask Mr. Baldwin for an explanation of the mysterious call on the Un-American chairman.

However, I might have forgotten about Rep. Thomas' revelation, his guest book and his smug little smile on the occasion, except that I saw a three-paragraph reprint from the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* beginning, "Gen. MacArthur has done something which adds to his stature as an occupation chief." It went on to tell how he had invited Roger Baldwin to Japan and Korea to advise the Army on civil rights, and how Baldwin had arranged to go in an unofficial capacity. This recalled the Thomas interview, and I determined to find out more about the ACLU position on the Un-American Committee, and whether Baldwin called on Rep. Thomas simply to pass on to him the committee's resolutions.

Obtaining a copy of a resolution passed by the ACLU executive board and released in part in its March 3 *Weekly News Bulletin*, a long and forceful statement calling for the abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, I was more puzzled than ever about Mr. Baldwin's relations with Rep. Thomas. Obviously the ACLU was not changing its position or in any way pulling its punches with regard to the committee, as some groups have begun to do in the present witch-hunt. The ACLU found that the "principal effect" of the House committee's probes had been "the unwarranted discrediting of genuine liberals who have been earnestly and sincerely seeking needed reform, particularly in the field of labor, monopolies and race relations." It declared that "resistance in the courts to citations for contempt where witnesses properly refuse to give information will again, as in the past, tend to restrain the committee's undue exercise of power."

Pursuing my efforts to learn Thomas' reactions to the resolution, I was surprised to hear that he had not seen the statement previously, although he thought he had read about it somewhere in the press. It seems the committee clerk could not find it in the files. Apparently Mr. Baldwin neglected the routine matter of sending an official copy to the committee about which the resolution centered.

Moreover, in checking with members of the ACLU board of directors, I learned that Mr. Baldwin had made no report to the Union of his meeting with Rep. Thomas. Rev. John Haynes Holmes, president, was in Chicago, but the treasurer, Ben Huebsch, said the meeting was reported to him privately, and while it would be improper for him to quote Mr. Baldwin, he could say that the meeting was not on behalf of the ACLU. "Don't imply there was something secret about it," he said. "So far as I know nothing was said at the meeting with Mr. Thomas which might not be shouted from the housetops." Of course, he said, such a meeting could take place to protest against the committee's activities, and he reminded me, "We are opposed to that committee." I asked, "But this meeting was not such a one, was not in behalf of the ACLU?" That was correct, he said.

Another member was openly incredulous that such a conference should have taken place "in view of the board's strong position against the Un-American Activities Committee," but when told Rep. Thomas had described it, he had no further comment. Still another said he did not remember hearing about it, but it might have been reported at a meeting he did not

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attend, or might not have been reported.

All in all, I got a persistent impression that Mr. Baldwin had failed to evince the same pride in the visit to Rep. Thomas that Rep. Thomas showed in his visitor.

IT WAS the morning of May Day when I returned to see Rep. Thomas, and he mentioned the appropriateness of the day. He read only a small part of the ACLU statement I handed him. He did not bother to turn to page two, where he might have read: "Nothing in recent years has been as un-American as the conduct of the hearings of the Congressional Committees on Un-Americanism." Handing it back to me, Rep. Thomas allowed a little smile, almost a smirk, to play about his lips. In his relaxed and confident mood, as he basked in the memory of Baldwin's visit, his cheeks were several shades less purple than usual.

"I think I can safely say," he said, "that as of today, May First, the ACLU cannot object to any of the committee's procedures or actions. In fact, Roger Baldwin was here—he sat right in this chair," he said, touching the black leather cushions on the chair to his right. Yes, I murmured, that much he had told me before. But this statement—. "In fact," he went on, and the little smile widened, "he came here to get my advice on something."

Letting this sink in, while I was busily writing, he went on with evident enjoyment: "He's a constituent of mine. We've been on the debating platform a number of times." His tone was mellow, almost tender. "There is between us," he said, "a strong meeting of the minds. We see pretty much eye to eye." Then he explained gently, his round dark eyes twinkling confidingly: "He is quite anti-Communist."

I asked if he had given Mr. Baldwin advice on Japan. Again the same mischievous twinkle, as he looked me in the eye mockingly, knowingly, and said, "I can't say what it was on."

But did he know that Baldwin was in Japan, I asked? (This was before Baldwin began giving out to the Japanese press on Henry Wallace. According to an Associated Press dispatch from Tokio on May 5, Baldwin told the Japanese press he disagreed with Wallace on Russia. He attributed to Wallace the belief that "all you have to do with the Russians is lend them money, be nice to them and gloss over the situation." He also said, according to the AP, that "Wallace thought communism had the answers to the problems.")

"I know he is," he said, nodding delightedly and smiling his teasing smile, for Rep. Thomas, you must know, has a gift for boyish enthusiasm despite his baldness and his beautiful store teeth and his magenta (when angry) hue. "And I knew he was going."

"And does it make you very happy, his appointment as adviser to the Army on civil liberties?" I asked.

"Well, they probably selected a man who knows his subject."

"By that do you mean a man who knows how to do a job on the Communists in Japan?"

"If he's tough with the Communists," he replied, his color mounting slightly, "he will be protecting civil liberties. If there's one outfit that's opposed to civil liberties, it's the Communists."

I asked him how, but he was off on his favorite subject—Russia. Then he said, suddenly, "If we didn't have civil liberties here, Eisler wouldn't be out on bond."

"Is that your idea of civil liberties, to let a man out on bond who has been unfairly arrested?" I asked.

"If ever a man was fairly arrested, it's Eisler," he said, somewhat touchily. "But I'm in a rush—I haven't time to talk about all these things." I arose to go, but then he held me with questions.

There was his stock question, did I think I would like Russia, and if so, he would buy me a one-way ticket. Would I go? "Sure, but I'll come back, Mr. Thomas," I said. "This country is mine just as much as it is yours. My family has probably been here just as long as yours or longer—since before the Revolution, in fact."

"Then I'll bet those ancestors of yours turn over in their graves every now and then," he said.

"Not at what I stand for," I said. "That's in the American tradition."

But the fact that to demand an altered form of government is an old American custom left Mr. Thomas cold.

portside patter

By BILL RICHARDS

Clare Boothe Luce has attacked Wallace's political and economic philosophy before the US Chamber of Commerce. The reactionaries are throwing the monkey wench into the works again.

●

Representative Hartley admits that there may be "some dislocations" if his bill is passed. This represents his idea of giving labor a break.

●

Arthur Murray's dancing teachers have organized. They've realized that it'll take more than a rhumba to shake his wallet loose.

Vittorio Mussolini in Argentina has a splendid opportunity to live up to his family traditions. He's been offered a job as a wholesale butcher.

●

Westbrook Pegler claims that an American must join a union or starve. This may be the reason why he's so consistently from hunger.

●

There are many who applaud Congress for making it officially Hoover Dam. Somehow the two words seem to go together.

●

Congress is warned that a harsh labor bill will cause trouble. As a baseball enthusiast put it: there is nothing more likely to cause a strike than a foul Ball.

●

The House and Senate are slated to adjourn for vacations on June 15. This will undoubtedly be their most constructive act of the year.

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